

## On Vaisnavi Diksa-gurus

Over the years there's been quite a bit of talk multiple GBC resolutions on the topic of vaishnavi dikshat that means ladies acting in the role initiating spiritual master. My stand over that time has been consistent which is that women are not meant to take the same initiator role as men.

From my perspective the evidence on which the current proposals stands is it is weak it's inconclusive and it's selective. I have repeatedly made my thoughts known to the GBC but with this video, I am making it known to the devotee community. I feel it's my duty to comment on what I am convinced of is a faulty decision that has many unseen consequences and let's say it's a distraction from what Srila Prabhupada wants.

At least I am true to my conscious. Now no doubt my presentation and my logic will not be perfect. But I consider that safer that the current proposal is for Iskcon to do what Srila Prabhupada did and that was no vaishnavi Diksha Gurus.

Hare Krishna, I offer my respect to my watchers and listeners to Srila Prabhupada. Let's begin the current standard for vaishnavi Diskha Gurus as stated by the most recent GBC resolution is the following and I am reading out and you can see it for yourself.

“A mature qualified female devotee may accept the role of an initiating spiritual master”

What is the qualification?

At least 55 years of age and in a stable family situation, living under the protection of a husband, elder son or son-in-law, qualified householder couple or senior vaishnava o vaishnavi Sangha.

Okay, I agree women can initiate no doubt, but the question is at what level of Krishna consciousness. Prabhupada and Gaudia tradition cite those on the level of Janava, Gangamatha, Sita Thakurani. They are not conditioned souls. So yes women can initiate, they can act as a Acharya. But not as do men at the stages of sadhana. No on what basis do I say that. Okay here is my pranam, here is a evidence exclusively on Srila Prabhupada's explicit statements about women being diksha guru or Initiating Spiritual master.

I mean to keep the argument simple that's is based on direct and not indirect statements. Prabhupada's explicit statements on the topic of Vaishnava diksha guru on the topic of strongest evidence on what he wanted. I am not going to repeat that. Exclusively on Prabhupada's explicit statements about women being Diksha Guru, which means I am not going to introduce other secondary evidence that can be argued in so many ways and is being argued in so many ways.

For instance, I will not use the hundreds of unqualified statements about everyone being a Guru spoken by Srila Prabhupad but that could be siksha guru, diksha guru vaisampradayaka guru. I am not going to introduce the varnasram considerations. What are the roles of Women in Society on outside other shastra on their interpretation. And I

am not going to get into detail of Gaudiya Tradition on women giving Diksha. And Lastly I am not going to talk about what other Vaishnava Sampradayas or what Gaudiyas think about this new resolution of Iskcon.

So Let's Keep it simple direct and explicit. And really with the straw between my teeth. Let me most honestly say that I have all appreciation for the Women in the Krishna Consciousness movement and for the service they have rendered over the years since day one. Iskcon would not be where it is without them and I don't know Iskcon would be without them. And I do recognize that some women have been continuing to be abused and mistreated. However because I am taking this stand in this video, that I want to point out that I am not male chauvinist. Obviously I am not a feminist. Neither I want to be politically correct to suits the thoughts of people outside the movement or those who want to be politically correct within the movement. And I recognize that some devotees will be upset by my opinion and they are going to want to argue. I don't want to respond. I won't. I have been arguing with GBC for over the decade. This is just a presentation you can take it or leave it. If you don't like it just press the button and shift Swami disappears.

So, here is the summary of the video. This is going to run for about 40 minutes total. I am going to present three aspects in this argument.

**1. First Point is ---The Weakness and Speculation that surrounds the vaishnavi diksha Guru's proponent primary evidence. The resolution itself which is based on 2 letters and conversation.**

**2. Second Point is---Prabhupad's own instructions which nullify or put into question the very validity of that evidence, in other words the use of letters and conversations.**

**3. Third Point Is ---Which For me is what is substantial and that is Srila Prabhupada's books and message of his own conduct which both say there are no Vaishnavi Diksha Guru.**

Okay, Let's start examining the foremost and most direct evidence. And here is the main evidence for the vaishnavi Diksha Guru's in two letters. Srila Prabhupad in 1969 writes about the topics of Men and Women initiating.

So let's look at one of these. This is the more elaborate one the other one more or less just repeats what's been stated here.

So you can read this along with I want that all of my Spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhakthivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedanta will be allowed to initiate disciples. May be by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of the generations. That is my program". (The Hamsaduta Dasa on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1969). A similar letter was sent to Kirtananda.

The other main evidence is the conversation I mentioned and this is some years later in 1976. Two Professor O'Connell who was a professor in a Toronto university. Srila Prabhupada was there.

Professor O'Connell asks, Is it possible Swamiji for a woman to be a guru in the Line of disciplic succession?

Prabhupada answered\_ Yes Jahnava devi was Nityananda's wife. She became if she is able to go to the highest protection of life, why it is not possible to become Guru, but not so many.

Okay let's look at the evidence behind the resolutions and let's start with the letters. I must admit that these letters had been really wondering they indicated to me that Srila Prabhupada had some idea of his disciples women included being initiators. It is interesting to note this is just sort of a side comment that the devotee who received the letter never got the impression that Srila Prabhupada actually wanted women to initiate. Anyway let's go on, I use this phrase some idea because it's very confusing and I am going to ask you to really look at the letter literally closely. If we do what Prabhupada's saying. He is saying that every devotee who passed this exam Bhakthi Vedanta Exam regardless of age or ashram is meant to become a Guru.

Now, I did the Bhakthi Shastra Exam in 1976. And If the Bhakthi Vedanta is anything to go by, It was very easy. The Bhakthi Shastri Exam at present I can remember that it was four questions where who is Krishna and who is Chaitanya?. So wasn't even very really very tough. So now let your imagination go. Imagine Brahmachari's Brahmacharini's living in the temple ashram and now we are going back to 50 years, along with Grihastas husband and wife with the little children that all of these are going to be acting as Diksha Gurus, How does that actually work? How does it function in perspective of what?

Srila Prabhupada said It's not clear, it improve but of course didn't clarify any further and contrast that further with differing statements of a conversation that we also sided with professor O'Connell.

Here Prabhupada is going, he now says well there is no so many. When Professor ask about the women being guru, Prabhupada said not so many. But back in 1969 he said all, so now all of a sudden all became not so many. And of course interestingly Professor O'Connell talks about Guru and Srila Prabhupada answers about Guru doesn't really say initiating guru. But Prabhupada brings up the example of Jhanava. And here is the another piece of information just to sort of elaborate on reasons for lack of clarity in what Srila Prabhupada meant and this is few years later in 1972 to his first GBC Map. Srila Prabhupada communicates with them and he tells them " Gradually they [GBC] will [be] initiators. At least first initiation, you must make advance." [Conversation with GBC, May 25<sup>th</sup> 1972.]. And that is what Srila Prabhupada had thought in 1969, Here's at least first initiation that means some may give first initiation, some may give first and second. It is not clear what is Prabhupada's idea.

And of course about the topic of being Guru and becoming Guru, We should also keep in perspective that Srila Prabhupada only talked about to man and he never talked to women about becoming Guru. Why not?. And then in 1975 which is what Srila Prabhupada

thought may by 1975 nothing happened and neither should Srila Prabhupad mention anything that I had this idea in 1969.

And when 1977 came and unfortunately that was the last year Srila Prabhupad was with us. Then the 1969 all disciples and 1972 all GBC men now became, Prabhupad said I will select some of your and the sons and daughters became only Men. What did Srila Prabhupad had in mind?

So, if you look at these change in ideas, when we are talking about who Prabhupad is talking about?. He is talking from all the disciples to all GBC members to some senior devotees. And what is he speaking about? . Well, At least first what does that mean? & What is the Gender?. Well in the begining it is sons and daughters, but it ends up being sons.

So, this is why I say in 1969, that Prabhupad had some idea , but in light of these other thing and of course ther's a lot more. But these things are there and they are prominent in the evidence itself that substantiates the resolutions. It is really speculative to say that this is what Srila's Prabhupad's idea was it's just there's too much lack of clarity to say this is what Prabhupad wanted. It is not clear what Prabhupad wanted. And to say so is a very selective intepretation of the letter. It doesn't address the implication of prabhupad wrote in the letter as well as the conversation and so the legislationat the present it doesn't represent it's own evidence in other words the evidence on which the current resolution stands it doesn't support the resolution and what to speak about the other statements on the topic.

Okay so we looked at the letters, now i want to move to the conversations and see that there is similar lack of clarity professor O' Conell's conversation because and i have mentioned this before from 1969 all now became not so many . Everyone can become guru but now not so many can become Guru and we are talking about Guru not initiating Guru but that's a detail really and Srila Prabhupad again gives the example of Jhanava. And in that room sitting at Indian lady who ask the questions later on, Srila Prabhupad doesn't say that she can become a Guru. He is talking about Jhanava and neither does he cite any of his disciples.

So for me we are again let to speculate. What did Prabhupad actually mean and especially I want to bring in the second conversation that Srila Prabhupad had answering and this is the only other conversation, that answers the same question this time it's posed by a disciple Atreyarisi and he asks about women acting in a role of a guru. Prabhupada answered " It is not that woman cannot be acharya. Generally they do not become. It is very special case. But Janava Devi was accepted as, but she did not declare.". { Conversation with Atreyarisi in 1972.

So now the scope of what Srila Prabhupad means about the Vaishnavi Diksha gurus expanding from all, We say well generally they don't or very special case and they do not declare . What does this mean she did not declare? Do the men declare. It is different from what the men to than what women do . Obiviously it is not clear. And what's a very special case. What makes it so special . If you look at current resolution being 55 years old is that special means it happens to everybody in due course of time. So what special about that . But what Srila Prabhupad meant about being very special is not clear, he did not elaborate . So the evidence on which the decision is based is really very far from being

conclusive. Now this primary evidence of this two letters and conversations leave unanswered questions it has complex applications. We don't know what kind of initiators Prabhupad envisage at least first the evidences proposed are contradictory and the contradictions are not resolved by the GBC resolutions. So we have all women not so many generally they don't very special cases. So once again I am just repeating the resolution lacks sound basis on its own evidence. The evidence behind the resolution doesn't back the resolution .

**Hare Krishna, This is the first part of the presentation and now we are going to going to move on to the second**

The Second Part of my presentation will concentrate on Srila Prabhupad disqualifies actually the evidence upon which the Vaishnavi Diksha Guru proposal stands . Let me just introduce you to this Prabhupad stated that he didn't want the letters or the conversations to end up in the public forum . Now that instruction casts further clouds over the evidence of the resolution and Srila Prabhupad does say that what he wanted say was in his books, no need to look elsewhere. Okay lets just turn to what srila Prabhupada actually said now. Interestingly in the same year that Srila Prabhupada wrote those two letters about all their sons and daughters giving initiation. Srila Prabhupada wrote the following letter

#### **PPT QUOTE**

"I shall request you not to circulate all my letters that I address to you, Letters are sometimes personal and confidential, and if all letters are circulated, It may react reversely. I have already got some hints like that with letters I sent you regarding Kirtnanda and I agreed with so in the future please do not circulate my letters to you. All my letters to you should be considered as confidential and if you want to circulate, you must ask me before doing so.

Srila Prabhupad's intent here is really quite clear. He says don't circulate the letters they are personal and confidential they may act reversely and this certainly casts a certain cloud on the validity of the evidence because these Srila Prabhupad's words himself . But there is more and now we are going to move forward into 1977 Prabhupad's last year with us in August . Here Srila Prabhupad speaks about his letters . He doesn't want his letter on the public domain. In 1977 a devotee wrote to Srila Prabhupad and he wants his blessings to transcribe his recordings and to publish as cross-reference for his books. Now that sounds like a great idea and in fact that happened since Srila Prabhupad's disappearance.

But Srila Prabhupad gave the following instruction to Tamala Krishna Maharaj wrote the letter and he quoted Srila Prabhupada here

#### **PPT QUOTE**

" This is not necessary. My books are sufficient . Let all of my disciples read my books. This idea is over-burden. It will mean too many readings. Let them read whatever is there and digest it. Everything I have wanted to say I have said in my books. "This will only be superfluous. Tell him to concentrate on reading my books, not on studying such

transcriptions. Does he think he will find something else in these transcriptions that are not in my books.

Srila Prabhupada was pretty emphatic, he repeats himself from different angles of vision and Prabhupad is restricting the information, restricting the teachings to which devotees should turn his own teachings. So Srila Prabhupad talking about the reference outside of his books, his own words that he spoke either in class or conversations or morning walks. Prabhupad says that it is over burden not necessary why because everything I wanted to say I have said in my books and so Prabhupad say it's superfluous and he concludes by saying does he think he will find something which is not in my books.

So this puts into further question his conversation with academic O'Connell another recording of the conversation. So here we summarize that the primary evidence of which the concept of vaishnavi Diksha guru is based is just those letters and conversations. But Srila Prabhupad discounts them as valid evidence, so atleast the use such evidence becomes highly questionable and for me and some others becomes invalid. The conclusion should be that having first shown that the evidence itself is contradictory, and now that Srila Prabhupada discounts it that the resolution is insubstantial and unsound and that should be enough. but I will go on final part of the argument and that's the third part.

**Hare Krishna The third part of my presentation which for me is the conclusive evidence is that evidence of the Book bhagwat and present Bhagawat. Nithyam Bhagavata Sevaya.**

1--In part one I showed the weakness and contradiction in the evidence itself on which the vaishnavi diksha guru resolution is based

2--And In Part Two, It was seen that Srila Prabhupad himself discounted the evidence making it atleast questionable.

3--Now the third Part shows the Bhagavatam commentary, that Srila Prabhupad's own words says that women cannot be initiators, more over srila prabhupads personal conduct establishes what he wanted that was no Vaishnavi Diksha Gurus. He didn't establish any so the overriding emphasis and the overriding weight of the evidence is on the book bhagwat and the person bhagawat. And let's start with what prabhupad said in his books.

Now in commenting on dhruva's concern for his mother's liberation Srila Prabhupada writes on the fourth canto you can read this

#### **PPQuotes**

**Dhruva had a feeling of obligation to his mother, Suniti. It was Suniti who had given him the clue which had now enabled him to be personally carried to the Vaikuntah planet by the associates of Lord Vishnu. He now remembered her and wanted take her with him. Actually Dhruva Maharaj mother, Suniti was his patha pradarsaka guru. Padha Pradarsake – guru means that the guru, or the spiritual master, who shows the way. Such a guru is sometimes called Siksa Guru. Although Naradea muni was**



his diksa guru (initiating Spiritual Master). Suniti, his mother was the first who gave him instruction on how to achieve the favor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is the duty of the Siksha Guru or Diksha Gur to instruct the disciple in the right way, and it depends on the disciple to execute the process. According to sastraic injunctions, there is no difference between siksha guru and diksha guru, and generally the siksha-guru later on becomes the diksha-guru. Suniti, however, being a woman and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Maharaja's Diksha-guru. Still he was not less obliged to Suniti. There was no question of carrying Narada Muni to Vaikunthaloka, but Dhruva Maharaja thought of his mother." (SB-4.12.32).

This is the purport in fourth canto, you may want to take notes that this was written years after Srila Prabhupad wrote that letter or those two letters in 1969.

In this purport prabhupad makes clear that women can become padapradaksha guru, she can become siksha guru, but she cannot become Diksha Guru. This is Sastra and for us primary evidence the primary pranam. Our system is the Srimad Bhagavadam and its commentary overwrites all other evidence, so even if you consider the letter and the conversation valid evidence it has to be seen in relation to the Bhagavadam, and if you can't reconcile that lower evidence with this higher than you have to reject it.

As prabhupad said that he will find something and find something else in these transcriptions that are not in my books. This means that the letter and the transcriptions say what's in the books or the book says what he meant in the letter and in the transcription. And that the proper understanding purport of Srila Prabhupad clarifies what the letters and the conversation actually mean. There is a lack of clarity about them. Now Prabhupad makes it clear, that is what Srila Prabhupad taught us reconcile with authority Srimad Bhagavadam.

And now we come to our final evidence. Some may consider Srila Prabhupad's conduct as being the strongest evidence. What does the conduct say? Prabhupad does not make any vaishnava gurus all right but some will challenge, but does this mean something well. According to sastra it does.

What does Sastra state Chaitany Charitramrita, Kaviraj Goswami says  
PPT QUOTES

Dharma sthapanahetu sadhura vyavahara. A Devotee's behaviour establishes the true purpose of religious principles (cc-Madhya 17.185)

So the conduct of Mahagbhagavat like Srila Prabhupad established

1. How he wanted initiation to go on?
2. And who should do it?

And now in 1977 and the year that Srila Prabhupada was leaving this world, Prabhupad called the GBC and he made it very clear he was leaving. And he told them that you all discuss and ask whatever questions you want and how things will go on in my absence.

Very famous conversation, but here srila prabhupada said that how he wants diksha to continue in his absence.

#### PPT QUOTES

We begin the Sastra rules- Satsvarupa: Then our next question concerns initiations in the future, particularly at that time when you're no longer with us. We want to know how first and second initiation would be conducted.

Prabhupada Said- Yes I shall recommend of your . After this is settled up, I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating acaryas.

Tamal Krishna is that called rtvik-acaryas?

Prabhupada – Yes

Satsvarupa- Then what is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation and the...

Prabhupada- He's guru. He is guru.

Satsvarupa- But he does it on your behalf

Prabhupad – yes. That is formality, Because in my presence one should not become guru. So on ,y behalf on my order.....amara ajnaya guru hana. But actually guru but my order

Satsvarupa- So they may also be considered your disciples.

Prabhupada- Yes, they are disciples. Why consider? Who?

Tamal Krishna- No he is asking that rtvik-acaryas. They are officiating, giving diksa. Their...The people who they give diksa to whose disciple are they?

Prabhupada--- They are his disciple.

Tamal krishna – They are his disciple.

Prabhupada-- Who is initiating. He is grand disciple.

Satsvarupa – Yes

Tamal Krishna – That's clear.

Satsvarupa- Then we have a question concer....

Prabhupada – When I order, You become guru. He becomes regular guru. That is all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it. (Conversation with GBC May 28<sup>th</sup> 1977)

Now in the ensuing days Srila Prabhupada name 11 of his senior devotees not all his GBC men and he named the eleven men not women to act in the capacity of diksha Guru, that



was his choice . Is it significant that prabhupad didn't want name women. I think so some well, it's not relevant . Prabhupad didn't name any hispanics, He didn't name any Blacks. But the history of the ISKCON wasn't about hispanics and Blacks at that time but rather and Srila Prabhupad was very much aware that there was tension between some men and their attitude towards ladies towards women in ISKCON.

Just consider that one year earlier in 1976 Srila Prabhupad dismantled the entire Radha Damodar sankirtan party which was his biggest book distribution party in part for their prejudice against grihastas and women.

So Prabhupad was very much aware of their tendency to mistreat women ,but still he did not make vaishnavi diksha gurus.

He had the opportunity. He was now appointing them if he wanted to make a point of women 's role that they should also be initiators that this was what he actually meant in 1969. This was the time and unfortunately it was the last time. But he didn't . But Srila Prabhupad could have there were some highly regarded Ladies in our movement just like Jamuna devi . Prabhupad could have proposed her he didn't, and either the time that he was with us that Srila Prabhupad place a woman in the position of authorities such as GBC Temple president, BBT head or any top tier leader , not appointing the vaishnavi diksha guru which is very much a authority role a leadership role is in conformity with Srila Prabhupad's earlier conduct . And while Prabhupad talked to men about becoming initiators . Prabhupad never talked about or with his female disciples about initiation or that they should become initiators.

Why not alright let me just summarize this last part three Srila Prabhupad's commentary and his conduct made clear his intent regarding vaishnavi Diksha Gurus. This was the Book Bhagavat and the personal Bhagawat. And these are the primary evidence of what he wanted and this is evidence that's strong. The letters and conversations should be seen in relationship to his written word and his conduct.

We cannot outweigh two letters in the talk with the professor with our sastra the obvious statement of our founder acharya, the statement of his conduct.

### Final Conclusion:

So let me just summarize final conclusion the evidence for the Vaishnavi Diksha guru practice is contradictory, unclear and weak. Moreover Srila Prabhupad discounts that evidence and his scriptural commentary says that women don't initiate and by his conduct he says that women don't become Vaishnava Diksha Guru.

So the strength of scripture and prabhupad's contacts far outweighs the strength of the letters and conversations, therefore I would suggest reversing the decision whether that happens or not. Hare Krishna , But at least I would suggest the moratorium until Iskcon leadership is more mature to make such a decision.

In short safer than the current proposal is for ISKCON to do what Srila Prabhupad said and do what Srila Prabhupada did no why should i be diksha gurus.

## CONCLUDING WORDS

To be more clear let me say Yes, As Srila Prabhupad said women can initiate and even be acharya ,but if not at the stage of Sadhana unlike men as I have been arguing at the stage of perfection like Jhanava, what constitutes not so many and a very special case and how such a qualified vaishnavi is recognized and empowered . Now the answers to the questions time, discussion and further Spiritual Maturity.

That is the Message of this video. I know Srila Prabhupad's love his daughters. I know somewhere mistreated and still are i know some devotees think that to compensate for their pain women deserve to initiate that for me makes no sense. I know the liberal feminist outside this movemnt expect this of us . I know some devotees accuse those not in favour of Vaishnavi Diksha gurs of being male chauvinists,narrow-minded part of an old boy's club. I know there is a lot of intimidation of opponents of and proponents of Vaishnavi Diksha Gurus. That's not right. And I know that some people will feel hurt by what I say and some will attack me for my stand and may be call me names. But i am following my convictions albeit the conviction of an insignificant jiva all that said let me really make clear I am an ISKCON man and a follower of the GBC and in the last 50 years , I have always encouraged devotees to follow the GBC and I will continue to do that as long as I live. That is what Prabhupad wanted of us ,it runs in my veins.and while I express a dissenting opinion on this video. I am critiquing a resolution and not the GBC or ISKCON. I am also raising awareness why following the GBC resolution . Some yatras will not vaishnavis giving initiation. Still we must all continue to embrace Srila Prabhupad's concept of Unity and Diversity, and whatever ouropinions should always remain united under the GBC and ISKCON..

Finally my humble request to devotees in general ladies,GBC members . Please forgive any offenses I may have caused in expressing myself . It is not my intent . Please dont take it that way.

Hare Krishna. Jai Srila Prabhupad.